

PARKERSBURG NEWS (W. VA.)
17 February 1980

Byrd to Help

Senator Byrd's decision to help remove the unreasonable restraints on the Central Intelligence Agency means that an almost immeasurably powerful political arm is being extended the CIA. Byrd indicated at a meeting last week that some of the tape which has been binding the agency must be cut in the interest of keeping America abreast of what is happening in other parts of the world.

Byrd says he favors reducing the number of committees that now demand reports from the CIA. It appears to be a worthwhile move. Clearly the CIA's obligation to report to three committees in both the House and Senate has provided grounds for much of the trouble the agency has faced.

Many members of Congress feel that if the reins on the CIA had been loosened months ago we would not be in so much trouble in either Iran or Afghanistan. We were never a strong believer in many of the sordid stories that were associated with CIA activities. The stories about assassination plots, drug experiments and surveillance of United States citizens, we feel, were unfairly overplayed and aroused in this country an animosity that never should have existed.

The CIA is not in what might be called a pleasant type of work. Their assignments are dangerous. They must search the most ruthless governments on earth for information that would benefit America. Some times there is not a pretty way to do these things.

The agency has been portrayed as a bunch of murderers who would go to any length to gain the desired ends. Perhaps that in a fashion is so. Gathering needed intelligence requires courage and determination, and if a few bodies fall here and there when the CIA must go the distance to protect America it is understandable that bloodshed is not always avoidable.